

John 07 – House of Prayer or Den of Thieves

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John 2:13-25

John's Gospel: Study of Comparisons

- John, being Hebrew, writes in Hebrew style though he uses Koine Greek as his vehicle
 - Proverbs often written in comparisons forcing reader to meditate on differences and similarities between them (Pr 19:25)
 - John has already compared the questioning of the priests with the testimony of *unlearned* but devout men concerning the identity of Christ (Jn 1:19-51)

Historical Cultural Context

- Judah a province of Rome ruled by a prefect (military governor) probably due to its volatile population
 - Jerusalem was filled with tens of thousands of Jews from the Roman Empire and eastward at Passover
 - Prefect would move HQ from Caesarea to Fortress Antonia over looking Temple to quash riots quickly
 - Temple guards would rapidly quell disturbances also

How Many Temple Cleansings?

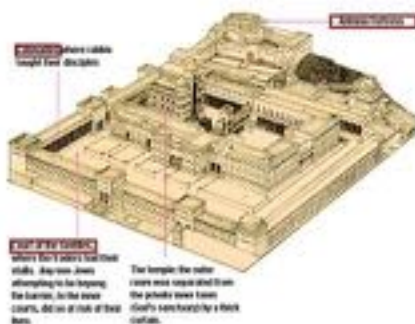
- The synoptic Gospels detail a Temple cleansing at the end of Jesus' ministry (Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-19; Lk 19:45-48)
- John does not date his rendition of Temple cleansing
 - Many assume it occurred early in Christ's ministry as John placed it early in His Gospel making two events
 - However, this assumption ignores John's obvious thematic arrangement; ergo, John writes of same event

John's Cleansing

- If Christ had cleansed the Temple early in His ministry He probably would not have had a ministry at all
 - If at the beginning of ministry His actions would have been summarily dwelt with and ended harshly
 - His large following at the end of His ministry made any action against Him a trigger for rioting that would have triggered a violent Roman response and a closing of the Temple during this lucrative period

Herod's Temple in John's Day

- Worshippers entered into Gentile court where the money changers and animal vendors sat
- Jesus would have taught in the Colonnades and here is where Pentecost (Shavuot) occurred



It is not the actions but the words

- Christ reveals Himself publically as God's Son when He proclaims the Temple as His Father's house
 - This contrasts with Nicodemus, teacher of Israel coming privately to talk with Christ about His teachings
 - Priesthood must accept Him or reject Him: they want Him to state His authority so He condemns Himself
 - Christ gives them a sign they consider foolish - No riot

The Passover {Pesach}

- As the true Pesach lamb Messiah cleanses the Temple for His coming sacrifice outside Jerusalem (Jk 13:11-13)
 - Sin sacrifice *burned* outside the camp while the blood was brought to the altar inside the Temple
 - Christ paid penalty for sin on stauros on earth while He presented Himself at the altar in Heaven before Father
 - Sin sacrifice ritual presaged His rejection as Messiah

Three Contrasts-Comparisons

- House of Prayer versus Den of Thieves
- Old Testament Temple versus New Testament Temple
- Believers who did not know themselves versus Christ who knew the hearts of all peoples
 - Believers enthralled by signs, not by truth or repentance
 - Pie crust believers: easily made, easily lost {Sower} (Jk 4:1-20)

House of Prayer-Den of Thieves

- House of Prayer - Refers Isaiah that the Temple was primarily for prayers (Isa 56:6-8)
 - Not since before Adam sinned had man a means to directly commune with God (Through the blood)
 - Priests perverted Temple from prayer to lucre (Ze 14:20-21)
- Den of Thieves - Advertised life but gave death (Nihilism)
 - All other temples and now includes God's House (Mal 1:6-8; 2:14; 2:17-3:1)

Altar of Incense Closer to God

- Importance of prayers emphasized by placement of altar of incense (prayers) inside Holy Place and sacrificial altar outside
 - Picture of saints prayers rising up to God justified by sacrifice of Christ (He 5:6-9)
 - Hebrews places Altar of Incense in Holy of Holies so important are prayers in New Covenant to God (He 9:1-5)

OT Temple versus NT Temple

- Old Covenant Temple all important as it provided the only location for man to learn and meet God
 - It must always be cleansed by repeated sacrifices (He 9:6-12)
- New Covenant Temple is the body indwelt by Spirit (He 1:29-34; 1Co 6:19-20)
 - It is cleansed once by the blood of Christ at salvation (2Co 5:17)
 - Christ speaks of spiritual while they speak of worldly

Compared to Sign of Jonah

- Synoptic Gospels have Christ speak of the Sign of Jonah denoting His death, burial and resurrection as a sign to the Jews (Three days) (Mt 12:38-42, Lk 11:29-32)
 - Synoptic gospels point back to OT showing how they foretold His coming, His death and His resurrection
- John contrasts old covenant priests with new covenant Priest showing His inclusiveness of Jews and Gentiles

Knowledge of People versus Christ

- This contrast is the most pertinent as it persists today
 - People believed because of signs not faith
 - They could be swayed by changing winds of truth (Ep 4:11-14; Rv 19:20)
 - Jesus speaks to this theme later in John's Gospel (Jn 5:39-46)
- Christ, as Creator, knew man's fickleness (Jn 6:60-71)
 - Only those whom Father calls believes truth of Christ

Anticlimactic Conclusion

- Again John ends this dramatic event anticlimactically
 - Out of this vast crowd many believe He did the signs but did not grasp the truth: Christ as Son of God-Messiah
 - These are not true believers in His gospel but are only witnesses to His deed(s)
 - They do not apprehend His message punctuated by His cleansing of the Temple area (Planting seeds of truth)

Who Were the Vendors?

- Because the Jews were prohibited from doing business on Sabbath (Pesach), vendors were probably Gentiles who gave percentage to Priesthood
- Gentiles should have been learning of God and not used for making money, perverting God's purpose
- This should have been done outside Temple area

Jews Using Gentiles

- Purpose of God in giving Law to Jews was to become a beacon of truth to all peoples via the Temple
 - God's provision of His sacrifice for sin so they could commune with God gaining life
 - Jews used Gentiles for monetary gain destroying msg.
 - Later in medieval times Gentiles will use Jews as financiers until they become the bankers of Gentiles

Not Sanctifying the Sabbath

- Thus, the Priesthood did not really keep the Sabbath
 - They used Gentiles so they could appear righteous
 - This turned the people from learning truth at temple
 - Strengthened the Pharisees who rigidly kept Sabbaths
 - Neither group understood truth of the Sabbath
OM 1:27-3:6
- People surrounded by error on all sides when Christ came offering truth and life like no one else OM 1:21-23

John's Message

- John is not speaking against appropriate monetary business transactions - Eisegetical interpretation
- John is speaking against the perversion of God's word to support man's teachings robbing people of Gospel
- John is illustrating corruption of Jewish society at all levels because few are teaching God's truth

Worthlessness of Ritual

- This episode teaches that rituals for sake of rituals breeds jaundiced, faithless followers seeking mysticism
 - These people latch onto whom ever appears to display power but do not truly believe God's truth
 - False teachers find green pastures in these groups with offers of truth but deliverers of death (Nihilism)
(Jn 2:1-3, 12-36, Jude 1:4-8, 11:13)
 - Such disciples are as prevalent today as in Christ's time

Churches Not Immune (Re 2:3)

- Churches in Revelation are in varying degrees of apostasy for the very same reasons
 - Many churches abandon Gospel for men's philosophies
 - Many churches embrace false teachers and gospels
 - Many *believers* never believe but chase after mysticism
- Many churches are beacons of death when they should be beacons of hope in an ever deteriorating evil world